



Éy St'elmexw St'elt'ilém - Good Medicine Songs

Songbook and Stories

To honour the spirit of children lost to residential schools,
survivors & families... reconciliation & Halq'eméylem revitalization



Chowiyes-Xwithet / Rise Up-Wake Up Songbook & Stories

Presented by Éy St'elmexw St'elt'ilém - Good Medicine Songs
& the Artist Response Team (ART)

Éy St'elmexw St'elt'ilém - Good Medicine Songs & Stories are created by Stó:lō cultural and language carriers Dr. Síyamiateliyót Elizabeth Phillips, T'it'elem Spath Eddie Gardner, Dr. Lolehawk Laura Buker, Xótxwes Jonny Williams and singer/songwriter/producers Holly Arntzen and Kevin Wright of The Wilds band and Artist Response Team (ART.)

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This is the second Song & Story project presented by Good Medicine Songs. To learn about, listen to and watch the first four songs and stories, please visit: www.artistresponseteam.com/goodmedicinesongs

For more information please contact Holly Arntzen: artistresponseteam@telus.net
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Chowiyes - Xwithet / Rise Up - Wake Up

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**Chowiyes—rise up, chowiyes, chowiyes—rise up,
Xwithet—wake up, xwithet, xwithet—wake up
Chowiyes—rise up, chowiyes, chowiyes—rise up,
Xwithet—wake up, xwithet, xwithet—wake up**

Ohhhhhhh

**Petam ye Staxwixwelh, Children calling, Children calling
Hakweles oxw “Remember us” Hakweles oxw “Remember us”**

**Petam ye Staxwixwelh, Children calling, Children calling
Chet ikwel o “We are here” Chet ikwel o “We are here”**

Ohhhhhhhh

Sing CHORUS

**Petam ye Staxwixwelh, Children calling, Children calling
Sqegetset “We all belong” Sqegetset “We all belong”**

**Petam ye Staxwixwelh, Children calling, Children calling
Alyemtset “We are strong” Alyemtset “We are strong”**

Ohhhhhh

Sing CHORUS

Xótxwes Jonny William’s Story

Chowiyes-Xwithet / Rise Up-Wake Up

When we found out the news about the unmarked graves of children in Kamloops, we got word that one of the ones who were found was my dad’s brother, or his uncle. There were 19 brothers and sisters from Stó:lō territory who went to the residential school in Kamloops. One of them was our family member.

The older siblings, my dad, his two brothers, and sisters that are still here, they had a meeting. After the meeting the family agreed that we’ll take the canoe up to Kamloops and bring those children home. We loaded up our six man canoe that’s named Xwexwó:s - Thunderbird. Our lightening. Our canoe is named that because it’s part of the Williams family. That’s why we brought that canoe in particular. We figured out who is all going, how many vehicles we had to take.

We gathered up all the singers, drummers, dancers who had come. We did our speech on the grass in front of the “school”, of what we’re doing and why we’re doing it. Some of the organizers tried to stop us; they stopped a lot of people from doing ceremonies in front of the “school”. We were told we weren’t allowed, but we did it anyway, because they’re not going stop us doing our spiritual work. We drove our truck onto the field and took our canoe off the trailer. Everybody who was walking around, saw something was happening and gathered near. The older cousins made a speech, talked to the people who were watching, about what we were doing. I called all the kids, and made a path from the mass gravesite to the canoe. I did my spiritual work, calling to the spirits of all the children from Stó:lō territory; we loaded them up spiritually, and sang and escorted them back to the canoe.

We had our Williams family drum group, and all our Williams kids danced in their regalia around the canoe, to honour all the ones who had died there. After we did all the dances, we loaded up the canoe back onto the trailer. It was still daytime, and some some of us drove straight back home. Some of us stayed until the next day, got a hotel room. That’s why I missed the burning. We stayed to give thanks to the Kamloops band and the chief and the community for allowing us to do our work. We watched more things that were happening there.

I was explaining it to my children, Katiyana and Ivy Jane. They got to dance on that field. The irony is that school was built and made to take away all culture. Yet we brought our children there and danced our culture. I took a video of a guy reading his poem, “I hate you school. You monster.” he repeated over and over. After I watched that guy read his poem, I thought of how we danced in front of that school, and said, “Now look at us school. Our children are dancing, they have their regalia, we have our language.”

After we got back home, we brushed off the canoe. Almost like brushing the children from the canoe. Release the mother canoe. Let them go home.

When we came back with the canoe, they had a burning for the kids. We left the canoe set up, did that spiritual work.

Síyamiatelíyót Elizabeth Phillip's Story

Chowiyes-Xwithet / Rise Up-Wake Up

In spring 2021, when the news broke about the unmarked graves of children in Kamloops, Lolehawk said, "We should write a song for the children." Xótxwes said, "It's time to rise. Children and youth are rising up, making the world notice them. These young spirits, these young souls, they're waking everybody up saying, 'Hey, we're here!' "
In our songwriting retreat in August, this song emerged.

August 14, 2021

My mother made me a little canoe and a whistle out of a hazelnut branch. Those were my toys. She unraveled a sweater and then re-knit it into a little sweater for me. I wish I still had them. My mom and dad only had \$18 a month. But we had fruit trees, and the vegetable garden, and of course we had the salmon. In reality we were well off because we had each other.

At residential school I didn't have time to find out all that my mom and dad knew, about medicines and all that. There were villages totally wiped out because of gold miners showing up...and they rolled in, blowing up salmon streams and people died from disease. Unmarked graves are nothing new. They wiped out our connections to each other, our protocols, our relationships. Children of the past suffered loss of family voices...voices of mom and dad and grandma and grandpa.

Willow Mussell witnessed one time when I broke down something terrible. Bibiana Sulisulwut, she called my grandson, he's a sacred worker. He worked on me. Because I guess I'm called a "survivor". And one day I will be really, completely well.

I think I told you what I feel when I was taken away from dad and mom. Sure I got teachings from them but I feel like I missed out on a lot. It was quite a while later when I found out that they were threatened if they didn't let me go to school. I thought mom and dad didn't want me home. I was so mistaken. So much I didn't realize.

(To the GMS group) I draw from you. Always when I hear you all singing, I draw, I draw, I draw and some day I'll be well. I'm so grateful for the Good Medicine Songs. When I hear the children singing in the language, I don't cry out loud (trails her fingers down her cheeks) but my tears come down, because I feel so honored.

Lolehawk: (speaking to Síyamiatelíyót):

When you were being given the honorary degree at the University of the Fraser Valley, you were on stage...and behind you I saw a thousand children in residential schools jumping up and down...because you were being honored in a house of learning. You made a promise at such a young age in residential school, "I won't lose this language." You are still walking that talk.

Beatrice Eppinga's Vision

Chowiyes-Xwithet / Rise Up-Wake Up

Beatrice Eppinga's Haida name is Ilcelayá, which translates to "Women of High Esteem." This name was given to Beatrice's Grandmother, her mother and her daughter. Beatrice was honoured with the Hereditary Chief name "Wioall Sganjuugahi".

Holly: The Good Medicine Songs performers were rehearsing at Old Skwah Hall on Friday, July 1st. We were working our last song, when Terry Wilkinson came in to ask if she could bring in two Elders that she was escorting to the Canada Day celebrations, happening later that afternoon at Townsend Park in Chilliwack. She introduced us to Beatrice and Gerlof Eppinga; they listened to us rehearse Sto:lo Siam Siyaye and let us know they enjoyed it. Then Eddie said, "Could we play Chowiyes-Xwithet / Rise Up-Wake Up" for them?" We all happily agreed. I could see Beatrice wiping her eyes as we sang. Afterwards, Beatrice shared with us an image that came to her in the course of listening to the song.

July 1, 2022

Beatrice: When they were singing the song, and I didn't know what it was all about, but I was sitting here, and all of a sudden I seen green grass just for miles and miles, there was green grass, and like graves opened up, and there was lots of children, lots and lots of children, with a uniform on, they had uniforms on. All of a sudden they sat straight up in the air and they held their hands up in the air. They kept going up and up and up. I didn't know what the song was about until they translated it to me. But I couldn't stop crying, all the time I seen all those little children, it was so beautiful how they were all happy and they were smiling. Some were crying but most of them were happy. Some were even teenagers in the far back, I could see them taller than the ones in the front. It was so awesome. Coming out of the graves they just sat straight up. Then their little hands went up in the air. It was awesome. I don't have images very often. But I saw this one today.

Terry: Spirit knows no language. Spirit is just spirit.

Beatrice (to Terry): I'm so glad you took us here. Now I have a hope for those little children. I just feel that things are going to come wide open now, and people are going to see what we went through at school. Even now today, I'm 78, and I'm scared to have a shower; I'm so scared I cry all the time. But [my husband] Gerlof always tells me to cover my face and then I can get in the shower. Because when we first went in to school, they put all the girls in one room and then they had cold shower, no warm, only cold. That's why I'm scared of water. For years I never talked about it. Even my children I never told them nothing. Yeah. Now they're the ones who have to give me a shower (laughs.)

The ancestors really gave me this song. What came was a memory about my Grandmother Theresa, who often took me to the river in the early months of my life. That was the place, my whole family, we lived at the end of the road, around the curve of the river, east of Mission. We could walk very quickly to that river. My Mom reminded me, in the first months of my life, she took me to that beautiful sto:lo. My young self was breathing in the shxwelí of the river, the cottonwoods, and that sense of the river being in motion since time immemorial. No matter where I've been on this land in my long years, I was deeply connected with the river. That friendship with the river began in those early years and stayed with me.

When I was walking with my Grandmother, fishing with her, I could see, back when the salmon runs were plentiful, the flash of the salmon as they jumped up through the waters. Grandma could see my young self was taking in, what that plentifulness was. She told me to respect the salmon that sustain a way of life, how they feed not only humans but all creatures both along and within the river. In her own quiet way, she spoke of how this river has always been a way of travel and of work for people; of the times when living along the river was made possible by canoe for travel and for fishing, and later for the tug boats hauling the "booms" to the mills along the river. This day, my memory is of her steady hands and the secure way in which she spoke about the way the river has always been in motion and giving so much to our way of life.

It became the "river of sorrow" for me with the pain of my Stó:lō Grandfather, who drowned in the river. It's a reminder that the river can take life and give life.

The river, like first salmon ceremony, reminds us that it carries the gifts, and is a way of experiencing the joy, the connection, the shxwelí of the river. The river is flowing through me. Whether you're Stó:lō or not, you can make a connection to the river, it's bigger than us.

These words reflect a long process in my life, they've been waiting to come. I felt very moved that the words would come. Then we in the Good Medicine Songs family all put the words into a sacred space. Let the drumming, and the words and the melody find their way into our songs.

When people hear the song, and sing it with us, there is a connection made. Or if we already know each other, it settles that connection more deeply. We need that river. And the river needs us, more than ever.

CHORUS

**Stó:lō siyám Siyaye, Stó:lō siyám Siyaye
Stó:lō siyám Siyaye, Stó:lō siyám Siyaye**

**River my friend, flows through me
River of sorrow, river of sadness
River my friend, flows through me**

**Stó:lō kw'elh lhe'a te eltha
S'o:leqw' te Stó:lō, Stó:lō ye stó:yxw
Stó:lō kw'elh lhe'a te eltha**

CHORUS

**River my friend, flows through me
River of plenty, river of joy
River my friend, flows through me**

**Stó:lō kw'elh lhe'a te eltha
Kw'omkwem te Stó:lō (strength) Stó:lō e' xwoyiwel (happiness)
Stó:lō kw'elh lhe'a te eltha**

CHORUS

**River my friend, flows through me
River of peace, river of love
Always, forever, flowing through me
Always, forever, flowing through me**

**Stó:lō kw'elh lhe'a te eltha
Siilekwel Stó:lō, tl'ils te Stó:lō
Stó:lō kw'elh lhe'a te eltha wiyotha...wiyotha**

**Stó:lō siyám Siyaye, Stó:lō siyám Siyaye
Stó:lō siyám Siyaye, Stó:lō siyám Siyaye...wiyotha...wiyotha**

Lets'e ó Sqwálewel / Unity

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Lets'e mot... Lets'e th'ále... Lets'e Shxweli

**S'íwes teli te yeqwá:ls - S'íwes teli te yeqwá:ls
Smestí:yexws te shxwexwós - Smestí:yexws te shxwexwós
Tawel teli te swayel - Tawel teli te swayel
Sesiq li kwe swáyél - Sesiq li kwe swáyél**

CHORUS:

**Teachings from the fire - Teachings from the fire
Thunderbird spirit - Thunderbird spirit
Lighting up the day - Lighting up the day
Crack in the sky - Crack in the sky
Praying together - Praying together
Feeling together - Feeling together
Singing together - Singing together
Unity - Unity - Unity - Unity
Unity - Unity - Unity - Unity**

**Lets'e ó Sqwálewel... Lets'e ó Sqwálewel
Lets'e ó Sqwálewel... Oh-oh-oh-oh-oh
Lets'e ó Sqwálewel... Lets'e ó Sqwálewel
Lets'e ó Sqwálewel... Oh-oh-oh-oh-oh... Oh-oh-oh-oh-oh**

**Ts'ahéyelh sq'eqó - Ts'ahéyelh sq'eqó
Sqwálewel sq'eqó - Sqwálewel sq'eqó
T'ít'elem sq'eqó - T'ít'elem sq'eqó
Lets'e ó Sqwálewel - Lets'e ó Sqwálewel**

REPEAT CHORUS

T'ít'elem Spath Eddie Gardner's Story

Lets'e ó Sqwálewel / Unity

“When the Williams family returned from Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, the home community of the Kamloops Indian Residential School, they brought the spirits of the children back home to Sqwá First Nation community in their sléxwelh (canoe); a yeqwá:ls (ritual burning ceremony) took place.” S'áhttel (food), á:wkw' (clothes) and syéxcha (gifts) were burned as offerings to the smímstiyexw (spirits) of the stá:xwelh (children) on the other side; they were able to feast and enjoy good food that they couldn't have in residential school. They had full bellies, they weren't starving.

The other part of the yeqwá:ls ceremony was to send syéxcha (gifts) across the fire to the little ones, and to the older spirits who were guiding them back home. The á:wkw' (clothes) and syéxcha (gifts) and regalia were in iyó:mex lets'ló:ts'tel (many beautiful colors), and they were burned in the fire. The children attending the ceremony were in awe to see those nice things being sent to them. They were dancing, they were happy. Xáxa st'elt'ilem (Sacred songs) were sung. Everybody was “olu xwoyíwel” (so happy) that the children had finally come home.

Semáthetel was the hiyeqwels (one who burns at a burning ceremony.) He was the one seeing what was going on the other side and told us what was taking place. Out of the sky he saw a hikw shxwexwó:s (big thunderbird) come swooping down. He and his helpers backed way up. Semáthetel explained the significance of the hikw shxwexwó:s (big thunderbird) waking us up, telling us that we need to drop our differences, and be yóyes sq'eqótel lhe'á te séyelh (working together in a good way.) He got representatives of different tselhxwelmexw (families) who were at the ceremony to line up. I was one of them. He told us, “The seywá:lelh (ancestors), who are with the stá:xwelh (children) who came back home, that's the way they are on the other side. If you want to have a good life, you need to drop your differences, then the st'elteláxwt (community) will benefit. We'll all have a better life.” The shxwexwó:s shxweli (thunderbird spirit) was a reminder that we do have the power to xwíthet (wake up) that shxweli, that spirit of unity (let'se ó sqwálewel).

The biggest message that came across the fire was that spirit of cooperation, collaboration, unity that we need to pay attention to. People were very happy (olu xwoyíwel) that ceremony took place because it carried a great significance to us. What animates our body is shxweli (our life spirit.) Our life spirit never dies. Canadians across the country got the message from the children to xwíthet, chowíyes (wake up, rise up) to theít (the truth) of what took place in Indian residential schools. These children do have a place of belonging. Re-remembering means they were separated, and now they are back as part of sólh st'elteláxwt (our community.) The other messages they sent across the fire were “Hákweles óxw (remember us!) Sqeqótset (we all belong!) Tset tse hí:kw áliyem (we have great strength!)”

So do we all, especially when we acknowledge that we do have differences at times, but we can overcome them, and build a better world. It's a s'íwes (a teaching) that goes beyond our community. Loy kw'esu tél:exwtset te sq'eqótel s'áylexw lhe'áte séyelh (we have to learn to live together in a good way.)

We need to learn to live together in a good way with all the people who have come into our territory. We need to get that right relationship, that sense of belonging, so we can work together to protect what we have here, on this iyó:mex Teméxw the Tál (beautiful Mother Earth.) We need to pass that s'íwes (teaching) on to all who come to live in our territory.

When we have burning ceremonies, and we get s'íwes teli te yeqwá:ls (teachings from the fire) it's a powerful spiritual connection. It cultivates a genuine true belief in our connection with the siywálelh -the ancestors. They are there to guide us if we open up our minds, hearts and spirits to that other side. We can get that intelligence and guidance and knowledge and teachings.

Who are my ancestors? Who am I? I'm an ancestor to future generations. How am I going to live my life so future generations can feel the benefits? It will be our role when we go to the spirit world, to guide future generations. What light will we share? When we're drumming (q'ewétem) and singing (t'ít'elem), we feel the ancestors. It's all about a shared experience, and the power of our st'eltí:lem (songs), and sólh sqwelqwel (our stories), cultivate values, principles, togetherness, and they build positive relationships, (qe íeyó:stem), and it's a lot of fun!

“Walking Backwards into the Future with Our Stories”

By Lolehawk

By the Big Muddy River of Rivers
The blue gray clay silt sticks and brings down your footprints,
Down, down into the deep layers of the river’s memory.

The old Sth’óqwí, the salmon bones,
lay piled under the great moving water,
under the river bed that shifts with each watershed year.

Footprints are paths and journeys taken along the river,
the old Stó:lō names are here in the great muddy,
And like the footprints that disappear into the clay,
the memory songs, the names of the wild things and
the river itself is held in the deep, deep, dark.

My grandmother’s footprints are here,
she fished for sturgeon, sockeye and trout,
Even my grandfather’s songs soar above the cottonwoods
Where he drowned in the great moving muddy.
His spirit is here in the bone yard of the water creatures.

The People know. Everything is in motion.
It has been since time immemorial.
Since Raven opened the cedar box and gave us the sun, the moon and the stars.

The great moving Muddy begins far away and
journeys towards the Big Blue coastal tides.
The People sang songs here, wove nets for fishing,
gave away the Sth’óqwí bones from the first run
and welcomed back the Swi’we--the spring eulachons.

Memory is here. It is layered under the silt of an ever moving water.
Remembering is why the Big Muddy moves.
Everything is in motion. Past, Present and Future.
We are the River People of the Big Muddy. The Stó:lō.



(L-R) Kevin Wright, T’it’elem Spath Eddie Gardner, Xótxwes Jonny Williams, Síyamiyateliyót Elizabeth Phillips, Sulisulwut Bibiana Norris, Lolehawk Laura Buker, Holly Arntzen.



Chowiyes-Xwithet / Rise Up- Wake Up Event - University of the Fraser Valley Gathering Place, Sept. 29, 2022